Pam. African
West. - Gold Coast
23

The Gold Coast

by

Sir Hugh Clifford, K.C.M.G.

fr. Blackwood's Magazine July 1918

THE GOLD COAST.

BY SIR HUGH CLIFFORD, K.C.M.G.

THE Gold Coast being situated in tropical West Africa, it is inevitable, I suppose, that the first comment, verbal or mental, that a mention of its name will impel the average reader to make, will take the form of some banality on the subject of its "deadly climate." Any adequate discussion of this question would fill a volume of the size and majesty of 'Maga's' recent centenary number, and nothing of the sort can, of course, be attempted here. It is necessary, however, to get rid of this West African bromide, as a preliminary to the examination of matters which are at once more interesting, more important, and less notorious.

Writing, then, not as the scribes, but as one having authority, seeing that I have served in the tropics more or less continuously since September 1883, and have acquired a personal knowledge of conditions in Malaya, Java, Borneo, Cochin China, Kambodia, Ceylon, Trinidad, British Guiana, Barbados, and West Africa, I have no hesitation in describing the "deadly climate" theory as a myth. The fact is that the climatic conditions of the Gold Coast very closely resemble those which prevail in the southern islands of the West Indies, and are considerably less hot and less humid than those which are ordinarily met with in tropical Asia. The monumental reputation for unhealthiness which men have reared up for West Africa, and which, even now, is very slowly crumbling into ruins, has for its foundation the ignorance which prevailed till quite recently concerning the causation of certain tropical diseases by mosquito-bites, the deplorably inappropriate methods of living which in the past were adopted by Europeans resident on the Coast, and last, but not least, by the failure or refusal to recognise the fact that the common, ordinary "Yellow Jack" of the West Indies and South America is present here in an endemic form. Since the beginning of the twentieth century the ignorance above referred to has been dispelled, and medical science almost yearly places within the reach of white men in the tropics new and more efficient means of combating insect-borne disease. Simultaneously, Europeans in West Africa have begun to acquire the art, so highly developed by their fellows in other parts of the tropics, of making themselves comfortable, of housing themselves decently, of providing rational means of recreation and exercise, and of assimilating their environment as nearly as possible to that of a small and rather dull country

town at home. On the other hand, endemic yellow fever, it must be owned, is about as unpleasant a bedfellow as even adversity could select; but so, Heaven knows, is Asiatic cholera, which is more or less endemic in so many parts of the East. Yellow fever, too, which is spread by the bite of a mosquito, like the cholera germ that lurks in unboiled water, can be avoided, given some vigilance and a modicum of luck; and in any event, a disease that can be fought with and gradually stamped out by means of preventive measures is a thing with which humanity can compete, whereas a "deadly climate" is a calamity that mankind can only grin and bear.

My tribute having been thus duly paid to the West African Climatic Bogie—a fetish which still numbers many devoted, and even fanatical, worshippers in this land of fetishism,—we are free to pass on to other subjects, concerning which, it is probable, the stay-at-home Englishman (if such an one still exist in these days of Expeditionary Forces) commonly possesses less dangerous knowledge.

The Gold Coast and its Dependencies — Ashanti and the Northern Territories—is a piece of territory roughly oblong in shape, lying along the coast of the Gulf of Guinea for a distance of something over 230 miles, and extending about twice as far inland. It covers an area of approximately 80,000 square miles, of which about two-fifths, or rather more, is under forest, the remainder being comparatively open "orchard" or grass country. The native population numbers in all about a million and a half, of whom three-quarters inhabit the Colony proper and Ashanti, the remaining fourth being distributed throughout the scattered and straggling villages which are spattered up and down the more or less open country of the Northern Territories. The people of the Colony and Ashanti — the dwellers in the forest area and its fringes—are men of negro stock, among whom the dominant race is the Akan or Twi-speaking folk. To this breed the *pakka* Ashanti, the Fantis, and the Akan tribes of the Colony alike belong. In the south-eastern part of the Colony, from Accra to the borders of the erstwhile German colony of Togoland, another race—the Ewe-speaking people—is met with. Neither the Twi-speakers nor the Ewe-speakers are aborigines in the true sense of that term, the former having trekked southward from the interior into the forest belt, the latter having come originally from the valley of the Niger. The natives of the Northern Territories, who until quite recently were the helpless victims of persistent Arab slave-raids, are ethnologically different from the negroes farther south; but though many of them show distinct traces of the intermixture of Arab blood, their culture is of the most primitive type. On the other hand, they

make excellent military material, as they have proved since August 1914, by many splendid acts of courage, devotion, and heroism, which have caused their outlandish tribal names to bedeck on numerous occasions the pages of the 'London Gazette.'

These facts and statistics, I fear, are almost as wearisome as the eternal squabble about the West African "climate" itself, but they are necessary for an understanding of what is to follow.

A good many of the races of western Europe — the Portuguese, the Swedes, the Dutch, the Danes, the British, even the Huns—have had settlements, one time or another, on the sea-shores of the Gold Coast, and as early as the reign of Charles II. the purity of the precious metal brought from this part of Guinea gave it a premium of a shilling in the pound, and conferred a name upon a now obsolete, but still much quoted, British coin. I often wonder whether members of the medical profession, lawyers, and auctioneers ever realise what a debt of gratitude they owe on this account to this remote corner of the Empire.

With the series of more or less accidental incidents which led to the disappearance and elimination of the other European elements I am not here concerned. The reader, if he be curious on the subject, will find the story admirably told in Dr Claridge's monumental 'History of the Gold Coast.' It was not until 1900, however, that the British began seriously to extend their effective administration to Ashanti and beyond, and up to that time the frequent raids and the constant menace to which the tribes nearer the coast were subjected by the Ashanti Federation rendered social and economical development a matter of much difficulty.

It is to some of the peculiar features of that development that I propose in this article to direct attention.

The West African negro has often been reproached with his failure to develop any high form of civilisation. It has been pointed out *ad nauseam* that he has never sculped a statue, painted a picture, produced a literature, or even invented any mechanical contrivance worthy of the name, all of which is perfectly true. Buckle, in his sweeping and comfortable fashion, accounted for this by what he described as the "penury" to which nature had "doomed" him, but Buckle had apparently never heard of the luxuriant forest country in which the Twi-speaking tribes have their home. His explanation, therefore, fails to fit the case, but I am none the less disposed to agree with him that nature, rather than the negro of the Gold Coast, is primarily to be blamed.

Some years ago a story in the pages of 'Maga' recounted the apocryphal adventures of a traveller in South America who was captured by a tribe of ants, and was reduced to a condition of abject submission by the threatening

attentions of ant-ridden hornets. This tale, in spite of the convincing fashion in which it was told, seems fantastical enough, yet it is a sober fact that the negro tribes of the Gold Coast have been subjected during the whole course of their history to a not dissimilar experience.

Recent scientific investigation has shown that the microbe known to the learned as *Trypanosoma gambiense*—and familiarly to the British subaltern as the *Tryp*—which causes sleeping-sickness in human beings, and incontinently destroys polo ponies, is to be found in the blood of an appreciable percentage of the forest-dwelling negroes of West Africa. The bulk of the population is immune to the disease, and epidemics of sleeping-sickness are accordingly unknown among them, though isolated cases are of frequent occurrence. The infection, however, is carried by the tsetse fly, which is all too common for comfort in many parts of Africa; and the terrible ravages caused by the outbreak in Uganda, which first focussed medical attention on the disease, was due to the passage of Stanley's caravan from the western to the eastern side of the continent. Many of the natives who made that adventurous journey have millions of *Tryps* lurking dormant and innocuous in their blood. In East Africa, though the tsetse fly abounded, they had till then been a nuisance, not a deadly peril. These insects now feasted in joyous innocence upon the new-comers from the West, sucked millions of *Tryp* into their systems, and thereafter, by biting the local population, started upon a career of slaughter of almost unprecedented magnificence. That, however, was East Africa's funeral, and our concern is with the West Coast.

Here the *Tryp* and the tsetse fly have maintained their unholy alliance for unnumbered generations, — the immunity from sleeping-sickness which the natives have acquired is itself a proof of the antiquity of the combination; and the restrictions which they have jointly imposed upon human development are mainly responsible, I think, for the failure of the natives of West Africa to evolve for themselves any high standard of culture.

The whole question mainly resolves itself into one of transport. Though the *Tryp* in some localities has proved himself a formidable enemy to mankind, he is much more destructive of animal life, especially of horses and cattle, the members of the brute creation upon which human beings have principally relied for aid in locomotion and in the transportation of their produce by land. The navigable rivers of West Africa are not numerous, having regard to the vast extent of the country, so they, at best, could afford only local and very partial relief; and the dense forest, which spreads inland for so many miles, presented in any case a formidable barrier to the passage of bulky goods. Now, in all primitive communities, agriculture is the initial basis of

wealth. Commerce is its offspring, and upon the accumulation of wealth, the intercourse with other races that results from trade, and upon the increased experience, the widened outlook, the multiplied needs, and the stimulated ambition which these things engender, the progressive culture of a people very largely depends.

The negroes of the West African forest country, however, were effectually deprived of all these incentives to development. Though the land is wonderfully fertile, they had scant inducement to till it. There is nothing to be gained by cultivating crops that will yield more than is required for individual consumption unless the surplus can be disposed of at a profit. In other words, agriculture can only lead to the accumulation of wealth provided that it supplies a foundation upon which a commercial system can be reared. The produce of the soil, however, is at once low-priced and bulky; and in West Africa each community found that the task of growing its own foodstuffs was lighter than that of attempting to carry the fruit of their labour to market. There were, of course, a few specialised branches of commerce in existence on the Gold Coast from, comparatively speaking, very early times. Thus salt, which is among the primary necessities of any tropical people, was obtained from the lagoons, and found its way inland, being passed on from tribe to tribe as an article of barter. The same was done with salt fish; and the kola-nuts of Ashanti, which required to be picked, not cultivated, and the gold dust washed from the banks of streams, were annually transported into the interior by caravans of pack asses or ponies that came down to the fringe of the forest country for the purpose, and were under the charge of Arabs or of natives who had come under Arab influence.

This trade, however, was negligible in volume, and was not of a kind to produce much effect upon the social development of the forest dwellers. It filtered in a leisurely fashion through the country, and brought the tribes that engaged in it into contact with none save its nearest neighbours. It, therefore, did not appreciably relieve the isolation in which they lived; it exposed the natives to no new influences, infected them with no new ideas; and it left them as it found them, small independent communities, self-supporting, self-contained, and self-sufficing. Their culture, accordingly, remained on a par with that of the more primitive hill tribes of tropical Asia. That is to say, they provided themselves with food by planting communal food patches and by searching the neighbouring jungle for snails and other delicacies tempting to the appetite; they tapped the self-sown palm-trees for liquor, and expressed the oil from their pericarps for edible purposes; they panned for gold, and fashioned therefrom

ornaments for their chiefs, and to a minor extent for their womenkind; they smelted iron and forged a few tools and weapons. Beyond these narrow limits of human attainment, however, they had neither the opportunity nor the means to progress. From time to time parts of a community might overflow from the parent village and start a new hamlet elsewhere, but the patriarchal spirit was strong among the people, and the allegiance which was owed to the tribal "Stool" or throne, and to the chief who was the occupant, bound these offshoots of the original stock together. Land for cultivation, and adjoining forest areas for hunting and exploitation, were available in plenty. There was room and to spare for all, and it was mainly when war broke out, or when two or more tribes banded together for defence or offence, that these communities came into contact with even their nearest neighbours. Once in a while a tribe, more energetic than its fellows, would start forth upon a career of conquest, in the course of which it would inflict an immense amount of misery upon other communities; but these invasions brought with them no new culture, and were detrimental, not stimulating, to local civilisation.

All these circumstances, moreover, inevitably tended to give individuality to the tribe, not to the men who composed it. Personal property could hardly be said to exist, for all land belonged to the community, though the members of a family were recognised as having a certain right to the food-patch which had been cultivated, and to the hut that had been erected by their joint labour. Even the heavy gold ornaments, with which the persons of the chiefs were bedecked upon state occasions, did not in any sense belong to the men who wore them. They were the property of the "Stool"—the traditional seat of his ancestors and of those of the tribesmen,—and his connection with this mystic piece of furniture conferred upon him such sanctity and authority as he possessed—qualities which were not regarded as being inherent in the individual himself.

It will thus be seen that there was no element in the social circumstances of these tribes of a kind that was in any way calculated to bring about change or improvement. They were wedged into a secluded corner of the earth, cut off from their fellows, so hampered by transport difficulties that agricultural development on a commercial scale was denied to them, and rendered by their environment so self-sufficing that intercourse with other communities, save in the way of raid or rapine, held for them no advantages. As a direct outcome of these things, moreover, they had been driven to evolve a system of paralysing State socialism, which suppressed individuality, put an end to competition by depriving suc-

cess of its reward, exacted a fair share of manual labour from every member of the tribe, and thereby made the growth of a leisured or intellectual class impossible. It is difficult to conceive any set of circumstances more nicely calculated than these to wilt the mental and inventive energies of man. In a State where the entire adult population could meet to discuss its tribal affairs—and in practice did this at least once a year—there was scant need for a written scrip for purposes of record. In a land where each community "kept itself to itself" as much as possible, there was even less use for literary correspondence. Both purposes were served quite effectually by the "language of the drums"—that extraordinary and elaborate system of signalling by drum-beating which, in the Gold Coast, conveys essential information to all the people of a tribe in an incredibly short space of time. Here, by the way, is a highly specialised art which the West African *has* invented, and not only invented, but rendered almost perfect. That he contrived nothing of a more literary character is due to the fact that he had no need for anything of the sort, and necessity, as we know, is the mother of invention. This applies with equal force to the whole of his culture. It was developed by him up to the measure of his requirements, and, lacking the stimulus of extraneous influences, he had no sort of incentive to carry it up to higher standards. Thus the negroes of West Africa might, I think, have gone on indefinitely living the life which the circumstances of their isolation and environment had combined to impose upon them, without anything in the nature of an internal event occurring to rowel them onward along the road of improvement or of social and cultural development. To break the smooth current of their utilitarian conservatism, propulsion from without was needed, and this disturbing influence was eventually brought to bear upon the natives of West Africa by the European trade-adventurers who arrived on the Coast during the concluding decades of the fifteenth century.

The new-comers, however, were interested, not in the moral or material "up-lifting," as the Americans call it, of the negro tribesmen, but in the rapid acquisition of wealth; and provided that this latter object was achieved, they were content to allow the social and cultural development of the people to take care of itself. The arrival of the white men, moreover, did nothing to relax the pressure which the tsetse fly, aided by the *Tryp*, had so long exerted upon local civilisation, and which had so much to do with the shaping of the unyielding mould in which it had been cast. This is strikingly illustrated by the character of the commerce which, in the first instance, sprang up between the white men and the native population. It was at first confined, almost exclus-

ively, to gold and ivory, both of which are articles of great value and of little weight or bulk. They were, therefore, peculiarly suited to the purposes of a people in whose country head-carriage — the least efficient and the most brutalising means of transport that can be devised—is alone available. The next development of trade between the white men and the natives is more significant still. The extraordinary convenience of an article of barter that could be made to walk to market must early have impressed itself upon the mind of the practical and labour-loathing African, and must have caused the slave trade to make to him a very special appeal. Domestic slavery, of course, had always existed, but an organised traffic in human beings was new to the West Coast. Africa is a continent of vast distances, of poor natural means of communication, and over large areas the tsetse fly has made vehicular traffic or the use of pack animals impossible; and to this, I think, is to be attributed the fact that commerce in slaves has here been raised to the level of a principal industry, and has in its time assumed proportions which are without a parallel in any other part of the habitable earth.

The ancient castle in which I sit writing these lines, and all its many counterparts up and down the Coast, are monuments of that shameful traffic which to-day stand forth grimly to mock the modern Englishman's boasted love of liberty and justice for all men, and to excuse and account for the distrust and suspicion of the white man that still lurks in the heart of the average West African negro. Beneath my feet are the gloomy dungeons, lighted only by funnel-shaped loopholes bored in the immensely thick walls, in which, decade after decade, the slaves were assembled and confined until the time came for them to exchange their horrors for the unspeakable inferno of the slaver's hold and the terrors of a boundless ocean. Local records and traditions have many ill stories to relate of the indecent scramble for the lion's share of this ignoble traffic, in which so many of the white nations engaged with such eagerness; and one British governor, at least, committed the incredible crime of surrendering half the refugees of a friendly tribe, who had fled to him for protection, to the tender mercies of an Ashanti army, on the condition that the remainder were made over to him to sell for what they would fetch. Can it be wondered if, in lands where such memories still linger, many years of just and sympathetic government will yet be needed fully to convince the native that the white man is to-day animated by high ideals, and that he is little likely to act the part either of the tyrant or of the knave?

It will be seen, therefore, that the outside influence which, at the long last, came to West Africa and broke in upon the isolation of its peoples, was that of the European in his most grasping and brutalised mood. Thus, while it im-

parted a certain onward impetus to local civilisation, by multiplying the requirements of the natives, and by increasing their material wealth, its moral effects were not elevating.

Gradually the public conscience of the white nations rebelled against the slave-trade, and at last, and with infinite difficulty, it was finally and effectually suppressed—mainly by means of British sea-power. It was not finally abolished by law, however, until 1807, and the illicit traffic had to be stamped out for some years after that date. At that time, moreover, no other trade had sprung up to take the place of the commerce in slaves, and for a period there was a strong inclination, even in Great Britain, to abandon settlements that had ceased to be remunerative, and a country whose principal article of export was now prohibited. Better counsels, however, prevailed, and though several of the smaller nations of Europe withdrew from the Coast, the British and the Dutch still maintained their forts as trading stations.

The headquarters of the former were at Cape Coast, but the interests of the white men in West Africa continued to be exclusively commercial; and it was not until 1830 that a Governor was appointed who was possessed of any breadth of outlook, or who recognised that the presence of Englishmen in these primitive lands involved the assumption of a certain measure of responsibility for the wellbeing of the natives. This man was George Maclean, the husband of the poetess L.E.L., whose tragic death in 1837 exposed him to so much wholly unmerited suspicion and calumny. His memory is still held in affectionate remembrance by the people of the Gold Coast.

In those days the jurisdiction of the white men ran only in the immediate vicinity of their forts. They had neither attempted nor secured any dominion over the little Native States by which they were surrounded, and these existed then, as they had existed in the past and as they exist to-day, as a number of self-contained and independent political entities, each of which is governed by its elected Chief, with the aid of his Councillors. Maclean was the first European to set up a court of justice in the Gold Coast, and very rapidly there spread among the native population a rumour —at first clearly apocryphal and incredible—that here judgment was given on the merits of any submitted case, without fear or favour, affection or ill-will. Disbelief died hard, I make no doubt; but presently folk began to troop in from the surrounding districts to lay their disputes before this oracular and incomprehensible white man. That, one is glad to remember,—for in West Africa the European record holds all too much of a kind to occasion shame,—was the real beginning of British rule upon the Gold Coast. It would not be easy in any part of the Empire to find for it a more honourable foundation-stone, or one the laying of which was

inspired by more altruistic motives.

Up to the time that witnessed the collapse of the slave-trade, the social condition of the natives, as has been already noted, had undergone no material change, except that a demand for goods of European manufacture had been created among them. This need had to be satisfied, and as slaves were no longer marketable, the negroes were compelled to exploit the natural wealth of their forests for the purposes of commerce. Palm-oil, palm-kernels, or rubber were to be obtained in most districts by any one who possessed the necessary energy to enter the jungle in search of them, and these articles were in demand among the white traders. Trade was thus shifted, for the first time, from gold, ivory, and human beings to forest produce; but though this was a step in advance, it introduced no new art, and accordingly imparted no strong stimulus to the cultural development of the natives. The tribes of the Coast region, and for some eighty miles inland, lived, moreover, under the perpetual menace of Ashanti invasion; and this, while it more or less paralysed their racial progress, caused these little Native States to seek the protection of the white men. Thus the Gold Coast Colony of to-day, rightly viewed, is not a territory which Great Britain has conquered, annexed, or settled, but a federation of small independent States, consolidated by British influence, but brought into being at the instance of the people themselves, who have voluntarily made certain sacrifices of time-honoured but indefensible tribal customs in exchange for the protection of His Majesty's Government. Had they been abandoned by Great Britain, as was so strongly advocated early in the nineteenth century, they would, one and all, it is probable, have been reduced to subjection by the Ashantis. On this occasion, however, the "policy of scuttle" for once did not prevail; but it was not until 1900-1 that the power of Ashanti was finally crushed by native troops, trained and led by British officers—an event that marked a new era in the history of the Gold Coast. Thereafter, for the first time in all their age-long history, there was afforded to the people of this part of West Africa a fair field and no favour in the area of social progress and development.

I would invite those who hold pessimistic opinions concerning the potential ability of the West African negro to advance along the path of civilisation, to consider the extraordinary revolutions which have been witnessed in the Gold Coast of recent years, and the fashion in which the native population has availed itself of the opportunity, so long withheld, that has at last been afforded to them.

I have said that the overthrow of the Ashanti tyranny by the force under the command of Sir James Willcocks, and the reduction of that troubled and trouble-produc-

ing land to a state of law and order, marked a new era in the history of the Gold Coast. Exactly ten years earlier, however, another event had occurred which, in my estimation, is to be recognised as even more epoch-marking in its character. This was the exportation from the Gold Coast in 1891 of a consignment of locally grown cocoa, weighing 80 lb., and valued at £4 sterling.

In almost any other part of the world this would, at best, have meant nothing more remarkable than the tentative beginnings of a new industry. Given the past history of the West African negroes, however, it here represented something much more important and significant. It meant, indeed, nothing less than that a great stride forward had been locally made in the culture of the people—an advance comparable to, and quite as far-reaching in its effects as, that which marked in its day the transition from the Palæolithic to the Neolithic Age, or from the Age of Stone to that of Metal. It meant that, for the first time in the history of West Africa, the cultivation of a *permanent crop* had been attempted, and, moreover, that the resulting fruits were being used, not for local consumption, but as an article of commerce. Any student of ethnology will realise how steep a step on the road of human progress is represented by an advance such as this; nor will he withhold his tribute of admiration from a people who eagerly assimilated that which to them was so wholly novel a conception, who forthwith recognised the promise it held forth to them, and who seized with avidity this, the first real opportunity for social development that had ever been afforded to them or to their forebears.

The extent to which the people of the Gold Coast availed themselves of this chance, is best shown by the following figures. In 1901, ten years after the first consignment had been shipped, and at the moment when the Ashanti despotism was being finally crushed, the export of cocoa had increased from 80 lb. to 960 tons, and its value from £4 to £42,827. That was a substantial advance, seeing that the people had to contend, as of old, with appalling difficulties of transport, and that the shadow of hostile invasion had not even then been completely removed. The next decade, however, was one of peace and development, and the natives enjoyed a security which had never before been known in equal measure. A beginning, too, had been made in the direction of railway and road construction for the purpose of diminishing the crippling difficulties of transport. The *Tryp* and the tsetse, however, still held the field; in the absence of traction-animals no vehicular traffic was possible, except on the railway; and an appreciable proportion of the total population squandered its labour on the exhausting and degrading work of head-carriage. Yet, in spite of all disadvantages, the new industry

throve, and by 1911—the end of a third decade—the export of cocoa had risen from 960 to 35,261 tons, valued at £1,613,468. Towards the end of that period, moreover, the motor-lorry had made its appearance, and though the great lumbering vehicles first introduced reduced the local roads to ruins, and quickly wore themselves to scrap, a beast of burden which could defy the tsetse and the *Tryp* had at last made its appearance in the West African bush.

Then arose Mr Ford of the United States of America. Those who remember his peace-circus may, perhaps, be disposed to poke fun at Mr Ford: not so, however, the people of the Gold Coast, who owe to him an eternal debt of gratitude. He placed on the market a very light and durable chassis, that could be landed on our shores at a cost of about £100, and which, being constructed of standardised parts, could have its life prolonged almost indefinitely by means of repairs locally executed. This vehicle, it was soon found, could run not only over the few big highways constructed by Government, but over tracks which the tribal communities could make for themselves under the supervision of their District Commissioners; and thus, at last, a practical and efficient solution was applied to the transport difficulties of the country—difficulties which, as we have seen, had sufficed to keep local civilisation and progress in chains for so many centuries. In spite of the war, the effect of this is to be marked in the figures of 1916, the last year of another half-decade of progress. These showed that the export of cocoa amounted to 72,161 tons, and its value to £3,847,720—considerably more than double the crop of 1911, and *more than a third of the total cocoa-production of the world.* It must be added that practically every pound was grown by native cocoa-farmers, aided only by such advice and assistance as could be afforded by an Agricultural Department which the war had sadly depleted of its European *personnel.*

I must now try, very briefly, to indicate some of the principal features of the tremendous social revolution which has been witnessed in the Gold Coast during the past five-and-twenty years, and which has resulted from the facts just recorded.

At the beginning of that period—that is to say, in 1891—we have a native population whose cultural development has never progressed beyond the stage of the planter of temporary food-patches, and the worker of self-sown jungle produce. At its end—in 1916, after an earth-shaking war has been raging for more than two years—we find these same people engaged in a permanent agricultural enterprise of the first magnitude, and supplying the world with one-third of the cocoa that it annually consumes. It is European suggestion, it is true, that set their feet at last upon the path of innovation, but it was left to the natives themselves to use

or to discard it. If a handful of the most energetic and enlightened among them had determined upon the former course, their decision would not have been specially surprising, though it entailed a departure from the immemorial practices of their people. In the Gold Coast, however, the movement has not been individual, or even tribal. It has been universal throughout the Twi-speaking States.

In 1891 the total value of the exports of the Gold Coast, which were produced by unassisted native labour — I exclude from this category, of course, gold that is mined and lumber which is extracted under European management, — amounted to rather less than £530,000. They consisted mainly of palm-oil, palm kernels, rubber, and other jungle produce, including such things as 30,000 monkey skins, priced at a pound a piece. In 1916 the articles of export produced by unassisted native enterprise were valued at £4,240,000, and of this handsome total cocoa accounted for no less than £3,847,720. The more primitive and outlandish objects had vanished from the lists— monkeys, for instance, were now having a quiet time of it; but these figures indicate that the income of the native rural population had been multiplied by eight in the course of five-and-twenty years. In actual practice, of course, the change in the financial position of the population is even greater than this would seem to imply. Some individuals began planting cocoa sooner than others; certain tribes took to the industry more quickly than their neighbours; in some localities the crops were specially productive. The distribution of the new wealth was not, therefore, uniform, and in many parts of the country incomes have been multiplied, not by eight or ten, but by a hundred or more; and in the Eastern Province, which "got going" first of all, family incomes of one or two thousand pounds *per annum* are to-day by no means uncommon. Here and there even larger fortunes have been made, and the fact of such big sums annually finding their way into circulation has greatly tended to stimulate local prosperity.

The first, and perhaps the most notable, effect which the sudden rise of this industry has had upon the native population, is the alteration which it is working in their notions concerning real property. Theoretically, all land belongs to the tribe, though, as we have seen, the family which planted a temporary food-patch was regarded as having a certain right to the fruits of its collective labour. This was a system which it was very natural for a people to evolve whose culture did not include any save shifting cultivation. The introduction of agriculture of a permanent character was to them, however, an extraordinary revolution, entailing a change not merely of degree, but of kind. If the land belonged to the tribe, and the fruits which labour wrung from it to the tiller of it, when the occupation by the latter ran

into a long period of years, instead of lasting only for a season or so, what became of the communal property in the soil? The Twi-speaking Native States are governed on very democratic principles, which include the right of the people to depose a chief if his personal or public conduct does not meet with their approval. The position of the planter of a cocoa-garden *vis-à-vis* the tribe was a matter in which the popular will supported the individual, as against the community, for very soon the vast majority of the tribesmen were themselves the planters of cocoa-gardens. Immemorial custom might say one thing, but immediate and personal interests said another, and that in tones that would take no denial. Accordingly, though the *theory* of the communal ownership of all land stands as four-square as ever, in *practice* the property of the individual in his cocoa-trees is fully recognised, and it passes on his death to his next of kin with the rest of his personal effects. Thus, for the first time in the history of these people, the tribesman has become possessed of interests which are distinctively his own, quite apart from those of the community, and the seeds of ambition, of competition, and of the advance to better things which these imply, have been sown broadcast among the native population.

Already the effects are to be noted. The Twi-speaking tribal system makes provision for a Paramount Chief, who is an elective monarch; the Chiefs, Sub-Chiefs, Elders and Councillors, who may be said to represent the nobles; and the "young men," who form the Third Estate. In theory this organisation is of a most democratic character, the Paramount Chief and all his principal subordinates being elected, respectively, by the whole tribe, or by certain sections of the community. The choice of the people, however, is restricted to the members of one or more families, the succession passing through the female, not through the male line. In actual practice, however, the selection of a chief for the Paramount, or for any subordinate, office has usually been made by the nobles, the consent of the Third Estate being given more or less as a matter of course, or being even taken for granted. This was natural enough in the old days, for, as I have mentioned, the entire political and social system of these people tended towards the suppression of individuality. But to-day the "young men"—the term is used to indicate their position in the tribe, and bears no reference at all to their age—may be, and often are, highly successful cocoa-planters, and possessed, as such, of great wealth. Riches mean power all the world over, but individual affluence is as new a thing in the Gold Coast as permanent cultivation itself. "Young men" of pre-eminent social standing and of great influence over their fellows are a novel and startling feature in local tribal polity, and the democratic system, which provides for the legal deposition of a chief at the dictates of

the popular will, places in their hands an extraordinarily strong weapon of offence. Of old such peaceful and orderly revolutions were of infrequent occurrence, and the impulse which occasioned them usually came from the nobles. To-day they annually become more and more common, and the initiators are most often the "young men" themselves, headed by the most wealthy and intelligent members of their class. This, it is probable, is but the beginning of a political transformation, the effects of which upon the tribes, and upon their system of government, it is as yet too early clearly to foresee.

There is another direction in which the changed conceptions concerning the value of real property, which have been induced by the spread of cocoa-cultivation, is operating upon the tribes. Formerly, when agriculture was confined to the growing of food-crops in comparatively small areas temporarily cleared for the purpose, there was an abundance of land for the requirements of all the tribes, and the boundaries which divided the territory of one community from that of its neighbours were very roughly marked and excited little controversy. When the cocoa-gardens began to extend in every direction, however, the question of the exact position of tribal frontiers, not only along the main highways of traffic but even in the depth of the forest, assumed in the eyes of the natives a new and tremendous importance. Now, in West Africa,—and indeed, as far as my experience goes, in all our tropical colonies, east and west,—the Law Courts which the British have set up are to the natives of the country what the football match, the music-hall, and the cinema would be to the English artisan if all those three delights were rolled into one. Here, then, with matter for dispute supplied in liberal measure by innumerable complicated boundary questions, and with the abundance of ready money derived from the sale of large quantities of cocoa, were means furnished of gratifying to an undreamed-of extent a rapacious and morbid tribal appetite for litigation. The deplorable results of this are enshrined in the records of the Supreme Court, and in those of the Privy Council, to which august body most cases are carried, as a matter of course, if tribal finances will still endure the strain. The local lawyer has reaped a rich harvest; but some native communities, it is to be feared, have emerged from these forensic battles in a condition of more material ruin than would have been likely to result from the more primitive form of warfare which these contests have replaced.

A more pleasing and satisfactory aspect of the social revolution now in progress in the Gold Coast is revealed by the use which the natives are making of their newly-acquired wealth, apart from their unfortunate passion for litigation.

This is shown in a very striking fashion by a comparison of the Customs' returns for the years 1891 and 1916 respectively, in so far as these relate to articles which are mainly or exclusively imported for native consumption.

"The drink-sodden native of the Coast" is as traditional, and, so far as my observations and inquiries carry me, quite as mythical, as the "deadly climate" itself. I have travelled widely throughout the Gold Coast and Ashanti, and have spent months on end on such journeys, welcomed everywhere by great concourses of the people in circumstances of intense local excitement. If drunkenness were as common as it is the fashion often to represent it, a good deal of it must inevitably have come under my notice on occasions such as these. As a matter of fact, however, I have seen, from first to last, fewer cases of intoxication than I have witnessed on a single Bank Holiday in London forty years ago. An habitual drunkard is, on the Gold Coast, a very rare being, and public opinion so condemns him that a chief who indulges in such weakness is liable to be deposed by his subjects, the charge, if proved against him, being held to be in itself sufficient to demonstrate his unfitness for his post. On the other hand, large numbers of the tribesmen over-indulge on ceremonial occasions,—notably at funerals. That death can be due to natural causes is a theory which is difficult of acceptance by primitive minds, and the extravagant expressions of grief and lamentation, which are considered necessary at a "wake," are designed by the individual mourner to convince his neighbours that he, at any rate, has had no share in the magic that has brought the dear departed prematurely to the grave. The mad scenes of organised woe which are thus enacted owe a measure of their energy, often enough, to the stimulus of intoxicants; but even on these occasions it is not prudent to conclude that those who are comporting themselves with such extravagance are necessarily the worse for liquor. Appearances may seem to warrant such a conclusion, but a mourner will break off, in the midst of the wildest and noisiest praises of the deceased and the most lively demonstrations of sorrow, to discuss the weather, the crops, and the price of cocoa, with perfect calmness and lucidity.

Moreover, if the consumption of ardent spirits were indeed the master-passion of the West African, as is frequently and mistakenly alleged, the great wealth which has been so suddenly poured into the laps of the natives of the Gold Coast must have led to their speedy demoralisation. It would also be reflected in the returns which show the amount of liquor imported. Now, in 1891, the quantity of rum and gin brought into the country amounted to 1,190,273 gallons. Five-and-twenty years later—in 1916—the quantity was 1,603,323,—an increase of less than 35 per cent. Spirits were

more expensive, owing to increased taxation and other causes, in 1916 than they were in 1891, and in the former year the people paid £130,602 for their drink, whereas in 1891 they had only paid £75,309. In the interval, as we have seen, the income of the natives had been multiplied by eight, whereas, during the same period, their liquor bill had not even been doubled; from which facts I draw the inevitable conclusion that, with increasing prosperity and the enlarged outlook upon life which improved circumstances and the spread of education bring in their train, the natives of the Gold Coast have convinced themselves that there are many things in the world which are more desirable than ardent spirits. Moreover, the small increase of 35 per cent in the quantity consumed indicates an actual decrease in the consumption per head; for during the past five-and-twenty years the population, in addition to natural increase, has been swollen by immigration from other West African colonies, and many parts of the Gold Coast and Ashanti, which were formerly inaccessible to European trade, have been opened up. Thus the range of distribution has been greatly extended, and the number of consumers has been much augmented.

It is interesting also to notice how much the rate of expenditure by the natives has increased in directions of an entirely different kind. In 1891, for instance, they spent £8607 on wearing apparel; in 1916 they spent £152,936. In 1891 they bought hardware and earthenware to the value of just over £16,000; in 1916 they spent more than £210,000 on household utensils of this character. In 1891 they consumed only 3627 cwt. of sugar; in 1916 they consumed 34,974 cwt. If cleanliness, indeed, rank next to godliness, the fact that the population in 1916 used 59,580 cwt. of soap, and the men of 1891 only 7453 cwt., must be accounted to the former for righteousness. They consume more than nine times as much kerosene for lighting purposes; nine times as much rice, nearly ten times as much flour, and eleven times as much salt beef and pork as in 1891, and the latter in spite of the fact that cattle are now daily slaughtered for food in all the principal villages throughout the cocoa districts. In 1891 they spent only £10,618 on imported provisions, as against £335,317 expended in the purchase of such goods in 1916; £102,916 on perfumery, £68,471 on furniture, and £109,673 on building materials, as against £8012, £709, and £7393 respectively, for these purposes in 1891. They also consumed 89 times as many cigars and cigarettes.

All these things indicate a very substantial advance in the standard of living. They mean that a large number of natives are housed to-day in more comfortable and more sanitary dwellings than were available to their parents a quarter of a century ago, while some of them have built really handsome houses for the use of themselves and their families. They mean that the average

villager's hut is well furnished with household utensils, and is well lighted after dark; that he is provided with suitable tools for the cultivation of his farm, and that he and his wives and children are well-fed, well-clothed, and well-washed. That some of them drench themselves with scents and cosmetics, and that they smoke far too many cigarettes, is perhaps to be deplored; but even these excesses point to a certain, if somewhat crude, striving after the beautiful and the good. Long before the native of the Gold Coast indulges in these luxuries, however, he first of all emancipates himself from the degrading work of carrying heavy burdens for long distances upon his head. This task is now performed for him by immigrants from other parts of West Africa whom he hires for the purpose, and to whom upon occasion he is prepared to pay an extravagant rate of wage. For the rest, his hunger for education—though the standard of attainment is far from high—amounts to a passion, the intensity of which has no counterpart in any other region of the tropics with which I am acquainted. Here, then, in a word, are to be seen the beginnings of a newly acquired and rapidly expanding civilisation.

But the fate which has pursued the West African negro so relentlessly throughout the whole course of his recorded history has its hand still heavy upon him. In the past the circumstances of his environment have been so unpropitious that he has had scant chance of developing any high cultural standard for himself. To-day conditions are becoming so easy for him that he is once more deprived of all incentive to evolve arts or crafts on his own independent initiative. The facile expedient of paying for all that he wants suffices to supply his every requirement, and as he is never goaded by the sharp spur of necessity, it inevitably follows that he is content to make use of the produce of the industry of others, or at best to imitate it, and has no inducement of any sort to devise or to elaborate a distinctive culture of his own.

Much the most notable achievement that can be placed to his credit is his invention, without the assistance of extraneous influence, of the democratic system of government and the State socialism, which are the basic principles upon which his tribal polity is founded. Recent innovations, as I have indicated, tend seriously to undermine this system; and it is interesting to note that while European political theorists are apparently working their way back to a state of things closely resembling that which the Twi-speaking peoples long ago evolved for themselves, the latter are displaying an inclination to discard them as an immediate and inevitable accompaniment of their first real and solid advance towards a higher standard of civilisation.